

Worship of Maryada Purshottam Shri Ram Chandra Ji

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Worship is generally understood to consist of rituals, group prayers, sermons, thrilling lectures, silent meditation, and sacred music and songs venerating God, persons, or objects, and includes private gestures such as spoken or silent prayers, fasting, penance, pilgrimage.

Some examples of the use of Worship of other persons or objects are: (i) '*I worship XYZ*' is expressing admiration to one's favorite musician or sportsperson; (ii) '*Work is worship*' expresses the need to be dedicated to one's work; (iii) '*Wake up and stop worshipping him*' is a signal to refrain from blindly trusting another person; (iv) '*Money worship*' points to a behavioral disorder when one thinks of money as their sole path to stability and that money will lead to greater happiness in the afterlife.

Maryādā, often written as **Maryada** (मर्यादा) is about maintaining decorum through self-discipline, and it includes the unshaken ability to stay within the bounds of morality, and rules and customs irrespective of place, time, and circumstances (*desha-kāla-paristithi*).

One who lives within the framework of *Maryada* maintains every relationship well and becomes a dignified person spreading the colors of his personality among relatives, friends, and society at large, whereas an unbecoming person is nothing more than a disgrace. [Examples: (i) a river is admired when it flows peacefully, not when it leaves its banks and floods the surroundings; (ii) earthquake occurs when the movements within the layers of our planet earth gets beyond its limit; (iii) a rangoli is a marvel when each color is well demarcated and is an unpleasant work when the colors are mixed up.]

In contrast to other species who abide by *svabhāvik jñāna*, inborn knowledge to live within certain limits, humans are the only ones to get out of bounds in the name of freedom to act in utter disregard of the Law of Karma, '*we shall reap what we sow*' - good actions will yield positive outcome and bad actions ...negative outcome. Hence the Vedas were revealed to four rishis, as the manual or rule book enunciating the universal code of conduct to keep us on the right path in life. These rules empower every human being on this planet to live life as the smallest unit of a family, society ...whereby no one would be content solely with one's own welfare, rather one would seek one's welfare in the welfare of all; and in so doing one would exercise self-restraint by following the rules for common welfare.

Purushottam: Those who stay within the limits become people of good character, wealth and earn respect in society. The one who possesses the highest excellence in thoughts, words, and actions is worshipped, admired as *Purushottam*, the best among humans. Such a person becomes a role model in society, inspiring others to elevate the mind to the sattvic level, be rooted in pure and brilliant thoughts, focused, level-headed, and integrity along with other virtues yield a personality that shine as bright as the sun.

Shree, generally written as **Shri** in Sanskrit denotes grace, splendor, beauty, wealth, prosperity. It is also used as an honorific title while addressing people.

Shri in Hindu mythology is the embodiment of royalty and dignity, personifying the following qualities: food, royalty, holiness, kingdom, fortune, sovereignty, nobility, power, righteousness, and beauty.

Rāma, generally written as **Ram** in Sanskrit means pleasing, charming, and charismatic. Other characteristics attributed to Ram are compassionate, serene, just, equitable and ideal, all drawn from the brilliant personality of Shri Ram in the Ramayana, the life history of Shri Ram.

Chandra is added to the name of Shri Ram given his glittering, bright, shining, lovely, beautiful and agreeable personality.

Definition of Bhakti, devotion from the Vedas

Veneration of God or any other person or object or principle is known as a *bhakti*, devotion. ...*Kasmai deva yahavishā vidhema*’ in YajurVeda 13.04, 23.03, 25.13, 32.06) explains bhakti as engaging in *Yogābhyāsa* (practice of *ashtanga yoga* the eight-limbed path of conscious living and spiritual practice that leads to Self-realization, liberation and cessation of suffering) with utmost enthusiasm and love; sincerely following the guidance and instructions of Eeshvar (God); surrender to the rules, instructions, guidance of Eeshvar (God) in the spirit of *Eeshvar-Pranidhāna*; specifically putting up optimum physical and mental efforts to be a faithful devotee of Eeshvar (God).

Understanding bhakti, devotion from the Ramayana

Pitri-bhakta, Shri Ram remains a devoted child by following the guidance and instructions of his parents. He does not budge an iota in leaving for exile and let Bharat be crowned king.

Guru-bhakta, a devoted student follows the guidance and instructions of his gurus, teachers, and mentors.

- A devoted sibling, he does his utmost to maintain excellent relationships with his brothers and the harmonious bonding among the siblings is referred to as the epitome of sibling relationships.
- A devoted husband, he stands as firm as rock on *patnivrata*, his pledge of fidelity to his spouse, Sita.
- A devoted friend, he demonstrates exemplary respect for Sugreeva and Vibheeshana,
- A devoted ruler, he ensures the equitable rule of law for increased happiness, peace and prosperity in his kingdom.

Veer Hanuman, the all-time renowned param-bhakta, devotee of Shri Ram only follows the guidance and instruction of Shri Ram. In the Valmiki Ramayana or Ramcharitramanas, Hanumanji is never seen praying and/or making offerings to Shri Ram as is commonly seen in present-day worship of Shri Ram.

Understanding bhakti, devotion from the Gita

In Gita 18.64, Shri Krishna is explicit: Arjuna needs to, in a rational manner, contemplate on the knowledge, counseling, guidance that he imparted to Arjuna and follow what his *svadharma-svakarma*, his duty as a prince to ensure that *dharma*, righteousness prevails in the daily life of every citizen of Bharat.

In slokas 18.68 and 18.69 Shri Krishna affirms that his devotee is anyone who understands and live life as per the knowledge imparted to Arjuna amid the battlefield and disseminate this knowledge to others inspiring them to live up to the teachings of the Gita.

Accordingly, a devotee of Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram Chandra ji needs to be someone who exercises self-restraint; is the best among human beings; who is a servant-leader focusing primarily on the welfare of people before himself; who is a role model, whose conduct inspires all to live the universal values of dharma

in daily life at all times and at all places; is philanthropic, simple natured, serene especially in times of crisis, knowledgeable, thus command respect.

On the above yardsticks, worship of Shri Ram is nothing more and nothing less than emulating the excellent qualities that led him to be respectfully revered as Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram Chandra ji. That implies realigning our character and conduct on the principles upheld by Shri Ram in his lifetime. Our greatest challenge is the spirit of selflessness, that is – an obligation to set aside our self-interest in performing our duties.

We need to maintain our duty, honor, and morality even in adverse circumstances as did Shri Ram during his lifetime. Walking-the-talk, we shall be leading our relatives, friends, and community at large to adopt the qualities that made Shri Ram an Arya Putra- a man of great integrity, impeccable character and unwavering loyalty to his family and society.

The values that we would want our children to imbibe would be best taught when we lead-by-example and walk-the-talk ...and there shall remain little or no need to command as in the Ramayana.

The Ramayana, life journey of Shri Ram, written by Sage Valmiki, is one of the greatest pieces of history of humanity. It is an exceptional medium to explain the importance of values and ethics in life. The characters depict what we usually aspire to be like: the ideal father-mother, ideal son-daughter, ideal brother-sister, ideal spouse, ideal leader, etc.

Values are best taught by way of storytelling, a fact unbacked by historical data. Yet we all recognize this practice has proved its worth across cultures and civilizations. Illiterate by the modern yardsticks, our ancestors did not fail in their duty to transmit the living values which transformed social animals into human beings.

Ram's embodiment of Dharma is a message about how we need to behave in every walk of life.

Real worship of Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram would be by way of daily dedicating time in *svādhyāya*, self-study of the Ramayana. In doubt, we need to engage in *nidhidhyaasana*, put questions to ourselves and find logical answers by contemplating on this knowledge treasure trove on the personality of Shri Ram, take the plunge like the seekers of pearls who delve into the ocean depths and bring out the gems. Such worship will continually illuminate and infuse in our hearts the ideals that Shri Ram had upheld in his lifetime.